

ones are still unaccounted for. Their hearts have a very big hole that will never be filled.

The POW/MIA flag is posted in my federal offices and on the wall behind my desk. I am proud of the role I played in authoring legislation to require that flag to be flown at federal facilities on patriotic holidays.

POW families will not forget their loved ones. Nor will this Nation. Wherever it takes us, for as long as it takes us, we will work to bring them home.

REMEMBERING OUR FORMER PRISONERS OF WAR

HON. MICHAEL BILIRAKIS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 10, 2003

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be here tonight to commemorate "National Former Prisoners of War Recognition Day."

Sacrifice. It's a word we all know. All of us have made some sacrifices in our lives. We make sacrifices for our family, for our close friends, even for our neighbors and coworkers.

Anyone who has ever served or is serving in our Armed Forces knows that military life requires many sacrifices. Over one million Americans have given their lives, the ultimate sacrifice, while serving in our nation's Armed Forces.

Throughout history, the brave men and women of our Armed Forces have risked their lives. They have done so not merely for family or coworkers, but for a cause represented by the American flag—the freedom to choose and the liberty to succeed.

But no one knows the meaning of sacrifice better than America's former prisoners of war. All those who have been POWs know the true meaning of freedom. They have paid a tremendous price for the liberty we all cherish. Their service and sacrifice, and that of their fellow veterans, make our way of life possible.

Throughout the history of the United States, more than 500,000 Americans have been taken prisoner. Each of these courageous men and women has experienced horrors unimaginable in the annals of civilized existence. Most have endured long-term deprivation of freedom and the loss of human dignity. Today, many continue to experience prolonged battles with various illnesses and other disabilities.

There are no words to adequately describe the sacrifices made by our former POWs. Humble words can never repay the debt we owe these brave men and women. However, special days like today provide us with the opportunity to reflect upon the terror that these great Americans endured in service to their country.

While we can never fully comprehend the suffering they experienced, we must respect their unwavering dedication to life. Without question, American POWs have demonstrated an unfailing devotion to duty, honor and country.

Their service helped preserve our freedom through two world wars and regional conflicts of the cold war era. Our former prisoners of war have given more than most Americans will be called upon to give for their country.

As we honor our former POWs tonight, we are reminded of our current prisoners of war being held in Iraq. We pray for their safe return and are working to secure their freedom.

"Former Prisoners of War Recognition Day" serves as a poignant reminder of the sacrifice and commitment of all the American men and women whose patriotism has been tested by the chains of enemy captivity.

Their experiences underscore our debt to those who place their lives in harm's way and stand willing to trade their liberty for ours. As a nation, we must always remember the sacrifices made by our men and women in uniform.

SENSE OF HOUSE REGARDING SYSTEMATIC HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN CUBA COMMITTED BY CASTRO REGIME

SPEECH OF

HON. PETER DEUTSCH

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 8, 2003

Mr. DEUTSCH. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of the Resolution condemning the arrest of Cuban political dissidents.

As the United States and the world's attention is focused on Iraq, Fidel Castro and his regime in Cuba have abruptly ended a perceived period of leniency and burgeoning democracy, by undertaking one of the harshest crackdowns against internal dissent. If the Castro regime believes that the arrest and conviction of 80 political dissidents in "kangaroo courts" for daring to advocate free speech and other rights for the people of Cuba will be ignored by the United States, Castro is greatly mistaken. My colleagues and I in the U.S. Congress have spoken in a unified voice condemning the unwarranted arrests of Cuban dissidents, and we will continue to aid Cuban people in gaining the basic human rights.

One individual to be tried in the "summary trials" which bear little semblance of justice is Dr. Oscar Elias Biscet, a physician who has first-hand knowledge of Cuban prisons for his activism on behalf of human rights. In February 2000, he was imprisoned and tortured for hanging the Cuban flag upside down, an undeniable act of non-violent civil disobedience. Dr. Biscet's freedom in October 2002 was short-lived and within months, this supporter of Dr. King's and Thoreau's peaceful methods of political change, has again been arrested for political dissidence and now faces life imprisonment under the draconian "Law 91."

Sharing in Dr. Biscet's good intentions, and sadly his fate of imprisonment, is Raul Ramon Rivero, an independent journalist and leader of the Cuban newspaper service. He is another nonviolent activist who was arrested on preposterous charges and sentenced to 20 years in prison for the simple possession of a Sony tape recorder and a Samsung computer, universal tools for most reporters. As numerous members of the Cuba Society of Independent Journalists like Rivero have been arrested and imprisoned, information emanated to the Cuban people has been severely limited.

Marta Beatriz Roque, a Cuban economist, also faces 20 years in prison for political dissent. The Castro regime arrested Ms. Roque, and other economists like her, for speaking the truth about the failings of the Cuban com-

munist economy. As was true with the historically similar failing Soviet economy, Castro's silencing of all economic criticism will not prevent the Cuban people from knowing the reality of their impoverished economic situation.

Castro's arrest of these and other political dissidents, many of whom signed the "Joint Statement" highlighting the regime's failures, is a Stalinist tactic aimed at stifling popular unrest. This joint statement, published on March 9, 2003, reiterated the well-known facts that the regime refuses to "respect the internationally recognized human rights or accept the existence of legitimate political opposition." Castro's harsh tactics will only stall the inevitable, the establishment of a free and democratic Cuba. The people of Cuba are impoverished and oppressed, and they are no longer swayed by Castro's empty rhetoric of helping "the people."

Dr. Biscet's, Rivero's, and Roque's passion for democracy and human rights for the people of Cuba is both inspiring and contagious, and this is what Castro fears most. The tides are turning against the Castro regime. His recent assaults on his own people epitomize Castro's true nature, his inability to ever be anything other than a fear-driven, totalitarian despot. These arrests and amplified oppression stress his anxiety and his desperate attempts to maintain power. Only the strong and the courageous can affect change, and we in the United States will continue to stand with those who strive to bring freedom to Cuba.

HONORING THE DILLARD HIGH SCHOOL BOYS, SOUTH BROWARD HIGH SCHOOL GIRLS, AND DEERFIELD BEACH HIGH SCHOOL GIRLS BASKETBALL TEAMS ON THE OCCASION OF WINNING THEIR RESPECTIVE FLORIDA STATE BASKETBALL CHAMPIONSHIPS

HON. ALCEE L. HASTINGS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 10, 2003

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, it is my distinct pleasure to give national recognition to three phenomenal high school basketball programs in my district. The Dillard High School Boys and South Broward High School Girls Basketball Teams have accomplished what many would consider a miraculous feat: each school has won four consecutive Florida state basketball championships. The Deerfield Beach High School Girls Basketball Team is also to be honored for winning Florida's 2003 Class 6A Championship, the largest division in Florida high school sports.

We often associate good coaching with star athletes and great strategy. However, Darryl Burrows and Abby Ward, Dillard and South Broward High Schools' respective coaches, have shown much more than an ability to outwit the competition. Their teams have continually dominated the competition, and each team is considered one of the best in the country.

Additionally, Everett Jackson, Deerfield Beach High's coach, lead a team that overcame many obstacles in route to one of Florida's most prestigious high school championships. He and his players too are to be commended for a job well done.